

## CHARIVARIA

**O**UR newest guided missiles, said a spokesman for the British aircraft industry, had been greatly admired by overseas buyers, and would extend the range—a nice touch of word play—of our exports very satisfactorily. This at last puts the nuclear warhead in its proper perspective as a factor in the national economy, and shows the outdatedness of those wicked old armaments manufacturers we used to hear so much about.

### Language Difficulty

ENGLISH hearts glowed with modest pride to read that Commander Colville, Colonel Charteris and Sir Edward Fielden, the Royal advance party in New York, were winning universal



admiration with their "Edwardian manners, their brown suede shoes and Charteris's snuff-taking." It fizzled a bit with the news that Americans were so impressed that they'd christened them "The Three Musketeers."

### Very Ill, Thank You

MORE and more the gossip columns are filling with Asian flu victims in the higher celebrity brackets, and film, TV and other personalities uninfected so far are said to be getting anxious. Some are trying to get a mention on the strength of the already outdated "virus infection," not realizing that its sweep through the N.H.S. prescription forms was in any case at mere housewife and office-worker level. One or two unsophisticated bit-players, to the unconcealed amusement of bigger show business names, have even slipped one

of those old discs in an effort to keep in the swim. However, all this is just the luck of the game. A B.M.A. spokesman says that there is no question at present of injecting Asian flu germs into the veins of publicity-seekers in exchange for a spanking fee.

### And Nowhere to Go

WITH Mr. Malenkov managing a little Central Asian power station, and Mr. Kaganovich a Sverdlovsk cement factory, Mr. Molotov booted off to outer Mongolia and Mr. Shepilov teaching school in the deep East, and rumours even stirring of the imminent disappearance of Messrs. Khrushchev and Bulganin themselves, remaining Soviet leaders are said to be soft-peddalling remarks about the uselessness of our House of Lords.

### It Pays in the Long Run

It is hard to say what Agatha Christie's record run proves; except, of course, that Emerson was right when he said that if a man build a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to his door.

### First Things First

WALES has been only mildly attentive to Mr. Aneurin Bevan's inflammatory utterances in Warsaw. The feeling is



that he would be more properly occupied back home, sorting out the controversy over whether the next Eisteddfod should or should not be held in Ebbw Vale.

### Contempt?

CONFIDENCE in Ghana's emerging judicial system has been weakened further by the news that the Bench in the Bing-Shawcross-deported-Moslems case was occupied by an African, Justice Quashie Idun. There isn't much hope for a system that allows its judges to be branded with prejudicial nicknames like this.

### Dogs in the Gallery

It was not to be wondered at that so many Derbyshire people became angry



over the removal to London of the Chatsworth art treasures, particularly as they had never seen them.

### Colonel-in-Chief Wanted

PROFESSIONAL soldiers, already uneasy in their world of change, read with fresh apprehension the news "Syria Sends In Terrorists," with its bizarre echo of Wellington sending in the Cavalry, or Montgomery the Tanks. Does this mean that in the new army Terrorists will be a Corps? That in time we shall have the Royal Terrorists? That when the next big organizational shake-up comes there will be tears on hardened old cheeks at the United Service Club over the headline "Terrorists to be Disbanded"?

### Post-mortem on Suez

WHAT the politicians had planned Was a well-run nine-days' wonder. Now we're given to understand It was only a ten-days' blunder.

## FOR VOTERS (ALL GROUPS)

**W**HEN Form A, Register of Electors, 1958 comes drifting through the letter slot within a day or two of Form D.L.1, Application for Licence to Drive a Motor Vehicle, comparisons are bound to be made. The coincidence is one that comes to most of us Occupiers once in a lifetime,\* and we may as well make the most of it, laying the two forms side by side on our desks and slipping easily off into a mescaline-like trance as we contemplate the unimaginable strangeness of human affairs.

Applying for a vote, whether for oneself or for others "normally resident at the above house or flat on 10th October, 1957," is probably the simplest application procedure ever conceived by the official mind. So brief and straightforward, indeed, is Form A that many an Occupier, when he has filled in his address and the names of the

\* Because of the principle of "creep" in driving licences. The refusal of licensing authorities to antedate licences, together with the reluctance (or at any rate failure) of drivers to apply for a new licence until the old one is some days dead, means that the renewal date advances slowly but inexorably through the calendar year. Thus the arrival of the reminder-cum-application-form will sooner or later coincide with the autumn shower of Electoral Roll forms. A further consequence of "creep" is that long-lived drivers eventually cheat their local taxation body out of a whole five bobsworth of driving; but that is not a thought that need delay us here.

people who live there and written "Over 21" three or four times and put "Yes" or "No" in Part 3, is unable for several days to bring himself to sign the form and send it off because of a conviction that there must be more in it than that. He reads the Notes. This in itself is significant. Nobody ever reads the Notes on the back of Form D.L.1, there being a general feeling that the form itself is bad enough without that. But Form A's Notes hardly complicate the issue at all. Apart from telling you what to do if you have a Peer or Merchant Seaman in the house, they concentrate on the problem of what constitutes a resident, a dullish theme. The Occupier looks in vain for Penalties for false statements, for instructions to have his signature witnessed by a Notary Public or Minister of Religion, for any faintest suggestion that a vote might be something worth having. He is compelled to complete the form without distinguishing in any way between himself and any twenty-one-year-old sheep.

Why, he is bound to ask himself, as he turns to Form D.L.1 in search of a driving licence, is not a little more interest shown in his qualifications as a citizen and a voter?

8. **Has any Court in the last ten years convicted you of plural voting?** Answer YES or NO, and if "Yes," state whether you voted several times in one constituency or once in several constituencies.

No trace of this perfectly reasonable question occurs on Form A.

13. **Can you read in a good light (with glasses if worn) up to four surnames containing perhaps as many as fifteen letters each and possibly hyphenated, and are you capable of making a cross with a blunt captive pencil against any one of them?** If so, will it be the one you meant to make a cross against?

This, too, is missing.

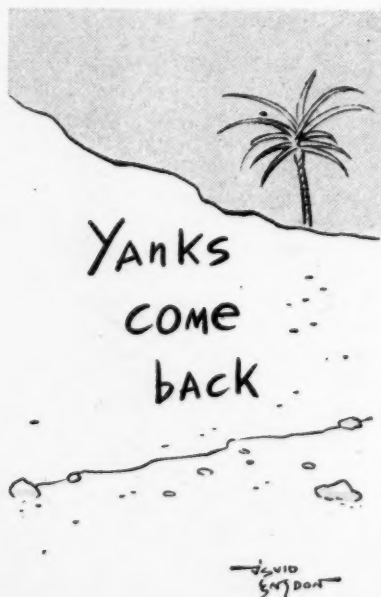
15. **Are you suffering from any disease, mental or physical, or disability which would be likely to cause the making of crosses by you on ballot papers to be a source of danger to the public?** Read Note (G).

If Form A were to incorporate (and none too soon) some such equivalent of Question 15 on Form D.L.1, it might just as well take Note (G) word for word from the back of that form. Note (G), motorists will be interested to learn, reads

"If your estate is in the hands of a receiver appointed by the Court of Protection, curator bonis or judicial factor, or if you suffer from any form of mental disorder or mental defect as a result of which you are certified or duly ascertained as subject to be placed under statutory supervision, the answer to Question 15 should be Yes."

But Form A does not care two pins whether you are in the hands of a curator bonis or otherwise ill placed to make a sound decision in the nation's interest. Form A is utterly and contemptuously regardless. It does not even ask

16. **Have you studied both "United for Peace and Progress" and "Industry and Society"?** Answer YES and NO, or No and YES, or No and No. Do NOT answer YES and YES. H. F. E.



## Prometheus on Little Rock

**N**OTHING like liberty in danger to bring them whooping at your back.

It wasn't so easy at first, when the whites were well on the attack  
And the niggers sticking their necks out the way that some of them did:  
And even a National Guardsman looks tough to a terrorized kid.  
But now I'm on the side of the angels; and gosh, how much one enjoys  
Defying the Federal thunder instead of a bunch of boys.  
And it pleases the people to see the man at the head of their affairs  
Defending to the death their right to deprive other people of theirs;  
So I feel that what was phony is kind of noble instead,  
And I'll go on standing for the weak if it does mean standing on my head.  
Also, it goes without saying, I'll stand for Governor again,  
With the National Guard, God help it, involved in a real campaign.  
So give me blood and tears and an injured innocence of heart:  
I can't see where it can harm me, however corny at the start.  
The blood's not likely to be mine, and tears are expendable stuff:  
And surely my people will vote for me if only I weep for them enough.

P. M. HUBBARD





# Preserving the Crown

By MICHAEL CAMPBELL

**W**HEN everyone seems grey to you, the place to be in is Fleet Street. I was very much the young novice there when this previously un-admitted encounter took place.

Left alone in our small office, typing, one afternoon, I was aware of a presence over in the doorway. If I turned, it would be just back of my right shoulder. I had only put in two weeks at that time, but already I knew the terrifying possibilities of people seeking publicity. I had been visited by a woman who believed that boiled beech-leaves were the answer to constipation, a man with a formidable grievance against Lord Goddard, and another who came repeatedly with frightful warnings from my horoscope. It was most likely the last. So I looked round in apprehension.

It was an unknown; a big man with a black beard who filled the doorway, and whose sleepy eyes fixed me in a kind of shameless and impertinent way.

I saw at once that under one arm of his shabby macintosh he carried the briefcase that had been common to them all. Apparently the stairs had troubled him. He was breathing heavily.

"Can I help you?" I asked, feeling uncomfortably that he had now taken the absolute measure of me.

He replied nothing whatever to this, but crossed the room very slowly, seated himself in slow-motion in my absent colleague's chair, placed the briefcase on the desk before him, unclipped it, and began to unload.

I had seen many unloadings, and I felt a slight sense of superiority over this man whose whole manner seemed to say "This is the most important thing that will ever happen here." When you have seen beech-leaves, horoscopes, and documents on Lord Goddard come out of briefcases you are not easily taken at a disadvantage. This was the usual pile of letters; but also a book and a large square tin. It

seemed he was almost ready to speak. Those strange eyes viewed me again, close together over the nose, and never blinking once. He was still breathing heavily: in-out, in-out, in-out.

"How old would you say I am?"

This was unexpected—a small trump card. The black beard was greying round the edges, and his hair, thick over the ears but rather thin on top, was nearly all grey. Sixty, I thought, so I said "Fifty."

"Hah."

He just stared. Was there not also about his eyes, I now thought, something slightly mad? In-out, in-out, in-out. The whole office seemed to be breathing. Come on, come on, hurry up, I said to myself, let's have it.

"Sixty-five."

Well, it could have been true. I gave him the satisfaction of astonishment. But he made no overt sign of being affected in any way. Then he bent slowly forward until his forehead rested





on my colleague's typewriter, and only the top of his head was visible, and so slowly back again. I was suddenly terrified.

"Did you see that?"

"Yes. I did," I whispered.

More breathing. Hurry up, I thought, hurry up, let's have the full horror.

"You've lost both temples," he said, "the crown will go soon."

So this was it! His elaborate bow had clearly been made to me as a last, perhaps mocking, gesture to some royal personage whose power was on the ebb. I glanced at the telephone near my hand.

"You'll lose everything unless you act now," he said.

"How do you mean exactly?" I murmured.

"I'll show you."

He began the elaborate business of rising with deep grunts. Several defences occurred to me, but I seemed to be paralysed. He approached.

"Now listen," I said, my hand on the telephone, "if there's going to be any trouble . . ."

"Let's have a look at your crown," he said.

"Let's *what*?" I cried.

From his macintosh pocket he produced a comb about two feet long. "Bend," he said, and his free hand fell heavily on the back of my neck. My head was pushed forward, and the hair was being combed into my eyes. As I tried to sit up the pressure on my neck increased. "Now look in the mirror." We had one over the mantelpiece. I stood up. I was somehow under his spell.

The hair was over my eyes and nose, and the mirror revealed very little. "Bend," he said, breathing behind me like a full gale and pushing my head down again. Whereupon I caught a glimpse of a bald spot on the crown of my head. "I can treat it now," he said in a curiously tired voice, as if the whole thing was an awful bother. Then he released me and started back across the room.

"But I'm afraid I don't want it treated," I said, brushing the hair off my face.

His only response was to throw the book across to my desk, saying "Page thirty-one. Three lines from the bottom. Page thirty-two. First six lines."

The book was *Gideon Goes to War* —The Story of Wingate, by Leonard



Mosley, and on seeing it I assumed we were back in the nether world again. However, I opened it as instructed, and read this: "He had recently decided that he was becoming thin on the temples, and, characteristically enough, embarked on his own régime of hair restoration. No unguents or frictions for him; the sand had got into his scalp and dried up the pores; the skin of his scalp had been starved of the juices that encouraged life and growth. How to

stimulate them back into action? He went down to the ship's galley and asked for a helping of meat dripping and this he massaged into his head."

I raised my eyes from the book with a slow dawning of awful comprehension. The stranger's hand was playing with the tin on the table and his expression, for the first time, betrayed a glimmering of ordinary human triumph.

"As soon as I read it, I knew," he said. "You've seen my head. When I



"We tried that."

was a child of five I took a dislike to butter. From then till now I've used meat dripping, *from the joint*, on my bread—toasted or plain."

"I see."

"Or as a dressing for vegetables. I'm now in practice. I've twenty-five letters here from grateful patients, and photographs too—before and after."

"What do you want of me?"

"I want a complete report. But written with full conviction from your own experience," he replied, opening the tin and revealing brown fat, hard and evenly spread inside.

"But I'm afraid that's quite impossible."

"They all thought that the first time," he replied wearily, and with frozen disbelief I saw him approaching again, the tin held open in his right hand. "But afterwards it seems the most natural thing, as indeed it is."

"But it's not so to me . . ." I began.

For a big man he could move with amazing speed. His left hand shot out and clamped round my wrist before I knew what had happened. He gave it a warning twist. Then he put the tin on the table and with the fingers of the other hand dug into the dripping, moulding and softening it for immediate use.

"This is absolutely ridiculous," I said, and began to struggle. Immediately this implacable bearded giant

tightened his grip, and my hand was pushed up behind my back. At the same time he raised a good lump of dripping out on his three middle fingers.

"No!" I shouted, fighting now without restraint. My hand was forced up, agonizingly, between my collar-bones. The man *was* mad. "Let me go," I cried, "let me go." He was wrestling to get the dripping on my head, panting so hard I had wild hopes of a heart-attack.

Then he lunged. I saw the brown substance coming just in time. I threw

my head down, almost hitting the typewriter, and it went somewhere across the back of my neck. At the same moment a piercing shriek rang out through the room—"Ha, Haaaah!"

My assailant staggered back with a muffled exclamation. My own heart seemed to have plunged out of my chest with fright.

Standing in the doorway was a familiar figure. A small wild-eyed man who, I noticed for the first time, was very bald.

"Ha, haah! My friend Scorpio," he said. "I came to warn you. Too late!"

My enemy was still recovering, and suddenly I saw my chance. I hurried to the doorway, pushed past the newcomer, saying "Excuse me," and turned and rushed down the stairs.

Once I nearly fell to the bottom, but at last I emerged into Fleet Street and walked, almost ran, towards the Strand and, as it seemed to me, towards sanity.

All the way I was trying to put the whole nightmare out of mind. But one thought was too insistent and made forgetfulness impossible. I could not help wondering whether or not my friend Scorpio was now receiving the treatment.

§ §

"The standard of children's reading is steadily improving and illiteracy among child readers has practically disappeared."

West London Observer

Splendid. And how are the paralysis figures among child athletes?

## Contemporary

SENSITIVE natures cannot well abide  
The word "contemporary" when applied  
To spike-legged television cabinets  
And furniture in get-together sets  
And open plans resolving spatial factors  
And units built for Hi Fi and a cactus.  
It's not the *meaning* of the word they query  
But how it *sounds*; aseptically cheery,  
All spotted tweed and corners, creaks and glue—  
Still, in that case, to give the word its due,  
When used on television cabinets  
And furniture in get-together sets  
And open plans resolving spatial factors  
And units built for Hi Fi and a cactus,  
It very often manages to be a  
Quite stunning piece of onomatopoeia.

ANGELA MILNE





# Heard Any Good Jokes Lately?

By ALEX ATKINSON

**W**HERE are the parrots of yesteryear, who used to shout obscenities at clergymen and frighten female owls? Jaunty and disreputable, they seem to have taken wing and flown back into history. Are they sitting under some gaunt tree on a windy plain, swapping yarns with Rabelais and Chaucer?

Once upon a time there were men whose eyes would light up when I walked into saloon bars, because they knew I was a pushover for being wedged into a corner and told dirty jokes to, one after another, with barely a pause for laughter, and I don't understand what can have become of them all. They

haven't died, surely? And if so, why haven't their places been filled? Are our young people to-day too dedicated to the proposition that life is earnest, too occupied with brooding, morose thoughts about technology and skiffle, to care about preserving the traditions of the good old British smoking-room?

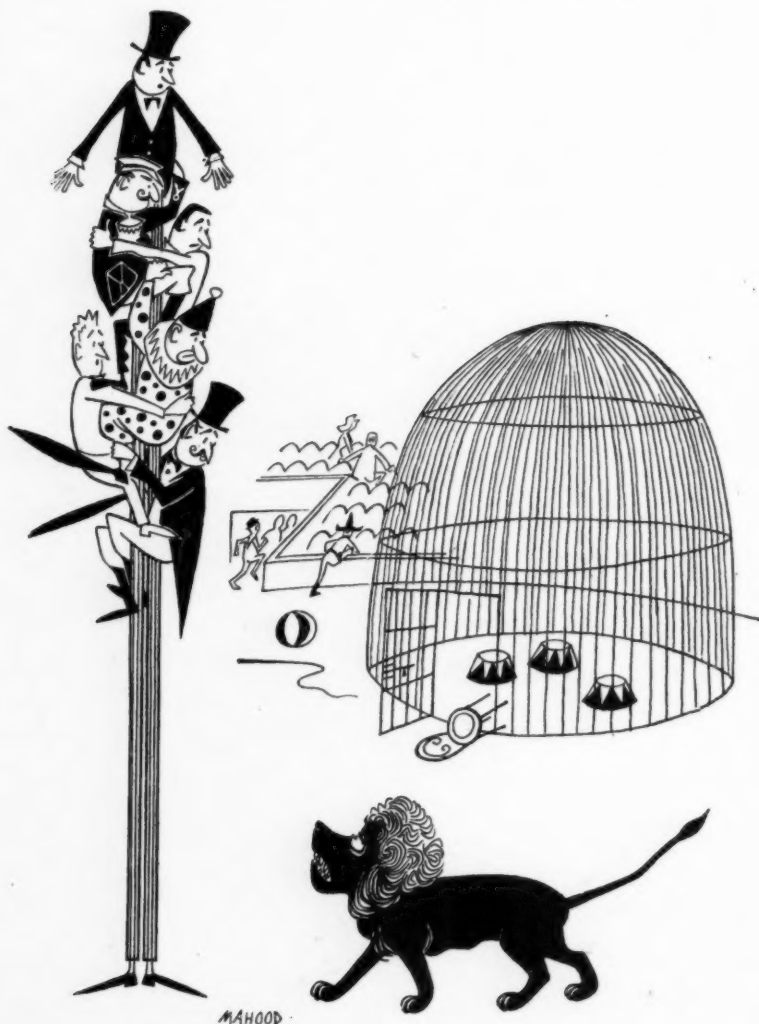
Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that for quite a few years now I've been able to wander through this fun-loving land of ours without the slightest fear that some twinkle-eyed joker is going to grab my arm at any moment and drone out one of these eerie, interminable sagas about this couple that had just got married, see,

and obviously had only the haziest notions about the facts of life. I used to be haunted by this macabre pair. They'd crop up over and over again, in one unlikely predicament after another, and often the very same predicament I'd heard about the night before, but with a more elaborate preface, or set in a different country, or hardly recognizable under a wealth of mirthful embellishment, or in costume, or sometimes even in French.

Why don't I ever hear about them any more? Did they eventually manage to get into the right bedrooms? Did their dads and mums give them a quiet talking to? Or a psychiatrist? Are they living happy ever after in an obscure suburb somewhere, perfectly adjusted, aware at last how many beans make five, without so much as a *double entendre* to mar their bliss? I like to think so. I also like to think that that tedious bunch of talking parrots came to realize once and for all that cursing and blinding in the presence of clergymen is a pretty dubious way of attaining immortality, let alone putting the wind up lady owls.

It was a nightmare sort of fairyland that used to open up before you when one of these jovial raconteurs got started on a session: benighted travelling salesmen were constantly blundering out of the fog to be lured or hustled into strange farmhouse beds at midnight; the air was filled with the noise of all those parrots jabbering at a bishop who never stopped coming to tea; unnatural practices of the most droll and improbable character were monotonously rife; the landscape swarmed with a never-ending kaleidoscope of comical rapists, uxorious seafarers, Father Christmases, widows, insurance-men, Boy Scouts, actresses, husbands, Jews, male dancers, Irishmen, soldiers, chemists, Scotsmen, Welshmen, barmaids, talking snails, talking hippos, laughable murderers, choirboys, schoolmistresses, old maids, policemen, and there was a young lady from Winchester.

I knew them all, the whole whimsical crew, and spent many a half-hour being conducted through their smirking, surrealistic half-world, and laughed a good deal, and only once felt really sick. I can't honestly say I miss them, and I'm sure they didn't do me any permanent



harm. All I'm concerned with is why they've vanished, and I have formulated a set of theories any one of which may or may not account for the mystery. In briefest outline, they are as follows:

1. Humorous invention in the Stock Exchange itself is now confined to *practical* jokes like setting fire to old Humblestone's moustache when he least expects it. This is because the brisk modern school of thought favour the *immediate* joke, requiring neither explanation nor another round of drinks.

2. The world of the dirty joke at last became so depressing that people fled from it into the fantasy-world of present-day reality, and won't come out.

3. Most of the jokes found their way into the Light Programme or TV variety. The remainder were used up by Mr. Osborne in *The Entertainer*. Familiarity bred.

4. The universities are filling up with mournful, clean-limbed products of the Welfare State, and travelling salesmen are working so hard to put the old country back on its feet without endangering their expense-account fiddles that they haven't time for folk-art any more.

I did hear one joke, about a month ago; it had to do with a girl from Mars who worked by electricity, but somehow it seemed to lack the old classical dash. You can have it in a plain envelope if you're really interested, but I don't think you are.

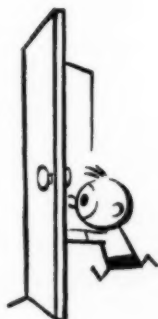
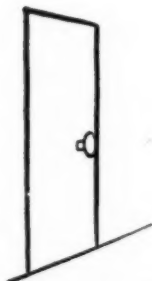
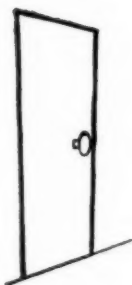
2 2

"REVENUE OFFICER  
required by  
SOMALILAND GOVERNMENT

on 2 years' probation for permanent and pensionable employment. Salary scale (including inducement Pay and present temporary allowance of 10 p.c. of salary) £838 rising to £1,544 a year. Outfit allowance £60. Free passages for officer, wife and up to four children under age 18. No income tax in Somaliland at present. Liberal leave on full salary after tours of 18-20 months. Candidates not over 30 years of age must be educated to Matric. standard and have good experience of commercial or local Government accounting. Experience of company taxation work or trade statistics an advantage. Write to the CROWN AGENTS, 4 Millbank, London, S.W.1. State age, name in block letters, full qualifications and experience and quote M1B/43654/EA."

*Daily Telegraph*

Candidates of 30 with more than 4 children of up to the age of 18 can expect them to be regarded as nothing but a sheer embarrassment all round.



ROY DAVIS

# A Tongue with a Tang

By JOHN MALCOLM

"RUTH? Luncheon?" said the Governor-General. He tore a letter in half. "You never told me. Never breathed a word."

Lady Curle took her cup over to the sideboard for more coffee. When her back was well towards the Governor-General she said "I'm sure I did, darling."

"Not a word."

"I must have."

"No."

It was the first week of their leave, and almost the first time for three years that they had been able to argue aloud over breakfast without having the whole colony talking about it next day. There were no servants in the house, not even an A.D.C.

"I've got to go and put the hides up in the nine-acre," said the Governor-General. "Be at it all day, to judge by

the state they're in. I'll take a loaf and some cheese and beer up. Be quite all right."

"Please, darling, you must be nice to her. She's quite an amusing girl really."

"She's forty-seven."

"Anyway, she's quite amusing."

"She's a social vampire. She sucks gossip like Dracula did blood. Bet you she's come home on purpose to see if she can catch us off our guard with something juicy to take back and gnaw over at those tea-parties in Portherbert. Never gave her a morsel there, at any rate."

"Poor dear, I expect living all those years in Portherbert got her down."

"Well, she got it down too. Wally says that she used to be a pleasant rattle when she came out. People asked her about and told her things because she

made them sound amusing. Doesn't even do that any more. Has to use her position to grind confidences out of them."

"What I can't stand," said Lady Curle, who had been arguing with unnatural consistency and felt she needed a change, "is the way she gets you both ways; you do something a bit silly and she makes it sound horrible; but even if you behave as prim as a parson she goes off and mugs up her psycho books and finds that your always wearing a hat with a feather in it means that you're really riddled with disgusting desires inside."

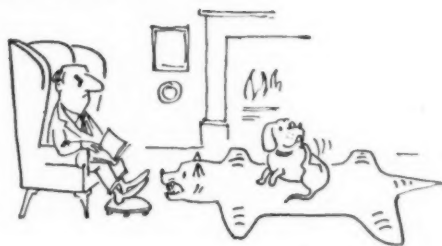
"What made you ask her?"

"I didn't. She said she was on her way to York and could she look in. I thought if I asked her to a meal she'd at least have her mouth too full to talk some of the time."



"Would you please endorse it 'Caught by radar'?"





"York?" said the Governor-General.  
"At any rate she won't be here long."  
The bell rang.

\* \* \* \* \*  
"Hello Gee-gee, hello Jane. I'm afraid I'm a bit before I said, but it means we'll be able to have a lovely natter and you can let your hair down now that you're miles away from all those starchies at Port H. What a lovely house, but I suppose it takes hundreds of servants to keep it going and they're such hell, aren't they? May I take my coat off?"

An efficient glance had already observed that it must be at least a month since Lady Curle had had her hair done, that there was nowhere in the hall where a coat could conveniently be put, that the house was run with the help of one daily at the most, and that His Excellency had a hole in the right knee of his corduroys. It was going to be a long time till lunch.

The Colonial Office had given the Curles plenty of practice in entertaining unwelcome but important aliens, so they were not in any real difficulty; the situation was enveloped in their politeness, though they had to stretch it a little to cover their displeasure at having to do an unpleasant job that they were not paid to do. It would have been much easier among the attendants and magnificence of their official residence in Portherbert than it was in the ramshackle happiness of their private valley.

They took their visitor round their land all morning, going up the steepest hills and through the heaviest ground to get her out of breath; every now and then the Governor-General stopped her talking with a vague reference to disturbing the birds; and they took it in turns to make small excursions to talk to a farmer's wife or examine a fence. Between these respites they listened to their guest, managing to seem interested in what she said without ever assenting to it as one by one she forked their

friends and subordinates out of the nasty brew of her recollections, sniffed them over, considered their failings in character, virtue, appearance, tact, intelligence and performance, and dropped them back into the cauldron.

"... and how old Wally Gorton manages to keep that bean business going beats me. They say he's quite clever sober, but I've not got the evidence and I've known him eighteen years now, man and boy you might almost say, at any rate batch, married and divvy, not that one can blame Susan for giving him the shove, though she must have some pretty fishy neuroses to pick Mistair Henriques as her St. George. He always seemed to me to make even the other consuls look human. What a pretty view. Though I suppose Wally's got one trump card the way he's the only man in Portherbert who can get an ounce of work out of the native; I've always thought he must have something in common with them, however far back the Gortons go on his father's side. What do you think, Jane?"

"Oh dear," said Lady Curle, "I'm afraid I wasn't listening. I was thinking about luncheon. I simply must run and pop a couple of things in the oven. Please forgive me. John will find you a drink."

"Of course, darling," said Ruth. "How gallant you are. A drink would be heavenly."

\* \* \* \* \*  
Shuffling dishes between courses the Curles found themselves alone in the kitchen.

"I think she's a witch," said Lady Curle. "She wills you into making mistakes so that she can pin you up in her collection. We simply *must* be careful."



"Bear up, darling," said the Governor-General. "Can't be long now."

\* \* \* \* \*  
Their visitor left at sunset. She had not begun to seem hoarse. They waved enthusiastically as her little car purred out of sight round the corner of the stables.

"You never told me she was coming," said the Governor-General. He went indoors and found a whip. Wife-whipping was a charade which the Curles had invented soon after they were married. It looked very effective now in the darkening air as the whip cracked like a rook-rifle and Lady Curle, untouched, giggled and screamed and sobbed for mercy before the towering figure of the Governor-General, moustached, male, aggressive, magnificent. They kept it up for some minutes and then suddenly stopped in sympathy. When they turned towards the house Ruth was standing in the drive watching them.

"I... I've been an idiot and left my coat behind. I didn't want to turn the car so I walked back. Don't worry. I know where it is."

She dashed into the house. When she came out the Curles walked with her to her car and watched her drive off again. They stood in the drive until they saw her car turn out of the park gates.

"Oh dear," said Lady Curle. "I hope she didn't see anything. Do you think she did?"

"Yes," said the Governor-General.

# The Calicut Manner

By CLAUD COCKBURN

WITH Christmas now so near, your average, decent man and woman is naturally spending a good deal of time, and even in some cases thought, on the question of making things sweeter and kindlier all round.

What is needed is a deeper awareness of what may be termed (and by me is so termed) the Spirit of Old Calicut.

Historians tell us that at one time—fortunately now long distant—there prevailed among the people of Malabar an attitude of almost vindictive suspicion *vis-à-vis* those who by industry, talent, and dedication to the cause of assuring Malabar its rightful place in the world, had attained to leading positions in that community.

Under the influence of this carping spirit they made it a rule that their top man, the Zamorin of Calicut—and lesser chiefs as well—were obligated,

after twelve years of office, to cut their own throats in public.

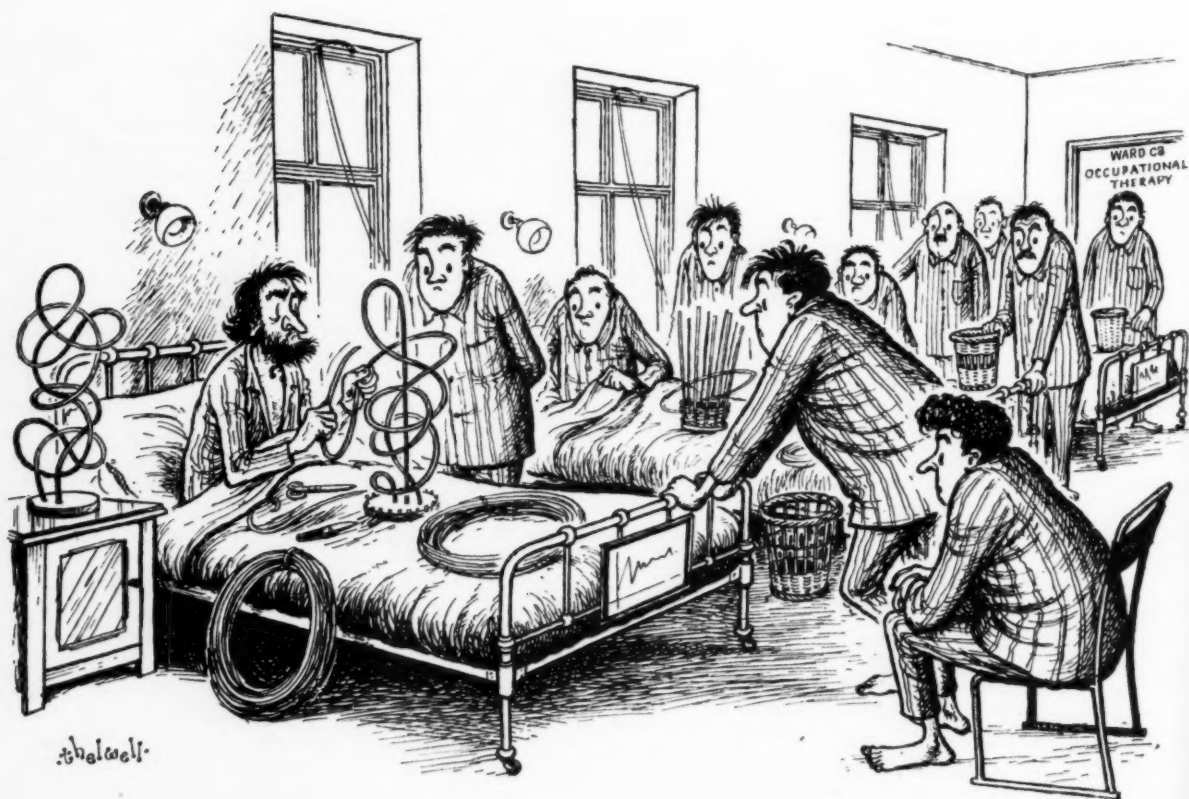
It was a custom criticized by many—that much one must say in all fairness to the progressives of Calicut. They declared that it not merely smacked of harshness in itself but failed to produce genuine efficiency in government and administration. Zamorins and others, they said, did not have time to “play themselves in” properly. And it seems to be the case that after a decade or so Zamorins became as moody and nervous as an M.P. with a marginal seat some months before General Election time, or a certain type of bold, imaginative company director on the eve of the annual shareholders’ meeting.

Such critics were at first derided, but, as invariably happens in the course of history, humane and enlightened opinion triumphed over outmoded prejudice and swept away abuses.

Thus it was that around and about the year 1600, according to the traveller Hamilton, author of *A New Account of the East Indies*, the undesirable practice was abolished. Instead, the Zamorin was merely required to take his seat in the national assembly, with his guards about him, and—on the assembly being declared “open” (but not before)—it was legal for anyone who felt so inclined to rush at him with a knife and attempt to kill him. The one who actually succeeded in knifing him was rewarded with the succession to the position of Zamorin.

In other words, the people of Calicut had discovered—possibly even a few years before the adage was uttered—the truth of the statement that fair play is a jewel.

It has to be admitted that, as yet, the Spirit of Calicut has not found total acceptance. There are still, as every



clear-headed observer will admit, far too many people about who, when contemplating the heads of their departments, the general secretaries of their union, the editors of their newspapers, or those acclaimed as best-dressed women of the year, are inclined to take it for granted that at the end of a certain period these individuals are going to feel an obligation to cut their throats in public.

And as the years wheel on and on, and Bishop X or the manager of the Y Football Club is still uttering spryly on topics of the day with no apparent thought of doing away with himself, resentment is caused among the unthinking.

People say "X must go!" and complain when he does not take the quick way out.

In military and top-ranking financial spheres this situation is particularly prevalent. Just because a man is heard to announce for the twelfth time that the problem of defence has been solved, or the national economy securely buttressed, or the wage structure put in durable shape, hasty folk suppose—or wishfully think—that he must be nearing what was formerly known as the Calicut Limit.

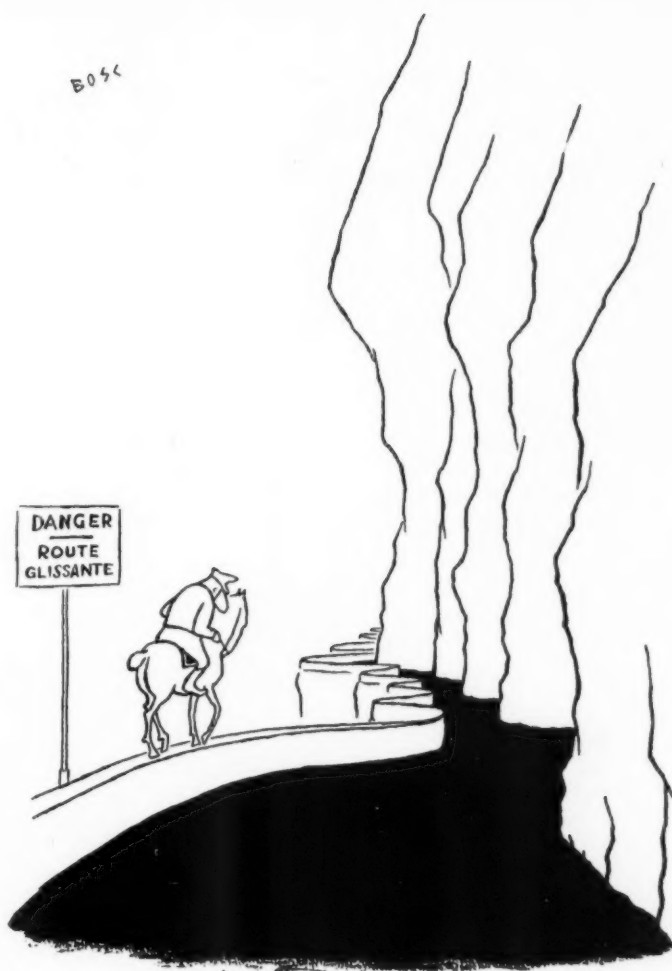
They seem actually to expect him to retire, or at least apologize.

They are, of course, suffering under a misapprehension—they have not moved with the times and have failed to note that the former Calicut Rules of the Game no longer apply.

Nobody, in any circumstances, may fairly be expected to abolish himself.

There are those who still feel that a mistake has been made, producing laxness and undue self-confidence in, so to speak, the Zamorin class. They point out that under the new rules one of the first things that happened in Calicut (we are still quoting Hamilton) was that thirty trained assassins who had gone to the Assembly absolutely confident that they would get their man were cut to pieces by the guards before they could do him more than quite minor harm.

To such it can only be said that every system has its faults. In any case it may well be that the cause of that particular contretemps was simply that the assassins themselves had become slack, had taken too much for granted that the boss was on the way out, and had skimped their training in consequence.



### *On an Old German Picking up Papers in Kensington Gardens*

AN old, stout German wanders round the Park,  
Picking up papers with a pointed stick.  
He whistles homely *lieder* like a lark,  
But when he speaks, his voice is dark and thick,

Like dunkles Bier, or Stube-smoked cigars.  
The English sun upon his forehead shines,  
Drawing out beads to flash like tiny stars  
Or bubbles winking in the Rhineland wines.

This many-cornered Europe is his home.  
In London toils the burgher bred in Bonn;  
The Swede is working in a bank in Rome,  
The Pole digs ditches by the broad Garonne;

They fill with foreign air their wandering lungs  
And light in freedom their precarious lamps,  
Their brains confused with unfamiliar tongues,  
The pages of their passports dark with stamps.

R. P. LISTER



# A NICE CUP OF T



"YIELD NOT TO TEN,  
FOR YIELDING"



"MY DEAR, SHE'S SUCH A SNOB — ALL HER TALL DARK MEN ARE GUARDS OFFICERS"



"TWO CUPSA CHAR, FRED, AND A RUB OF THE OLD RAZOR 'STROP"

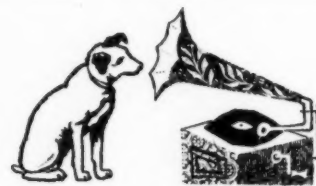


"HOW MANY LUMPS?"



## How to be Famous

## As a Politician



Amberg

**T**O be a successful politician in a democracy it is necessary to be an old Etonian, to marry the daughter of a politician and to have no political opinions. It is true that it may not be much fun for the lady being a politician's wife, but then it was not much fun for her anyway being a politician's daughter.

### ADOPTION

Having left Eton and married a wife, you next write a letter, or in the event of illiteracy get somebody else to write it for you, to the Central Office, and inscribe your name on the list of candidates. You then go on sending in your name to selection committees whenever there is a vacancy, until some constituency adopts you. All positive qualities, qualifications and opinions are a handicap—members of selection committees say that they don't mind themselves but other voters might not like it—and they very naturally prefer the candidate to be a bad speaker, because if he cannot express himself there is less danger of his being difficult.

### ELECTIONEERING TACTICS

Convention requires that when the election comes you should go round making speeches, but fewer and fewer people come to listen to those speeches and none at all pay any attention to what you say. There is, in fact, nothing that you can do about it at an election. The electors vote the party ticket and the candidates might as well be a couple of bootlaces. If the tide is running your party's way you're in, and if it is not running your party's way you're out.

### SPEAKING IN THE HOUSE

When you get to Westminster you must make a maiden speech, and the next speaker will congratulate you, saying how good your speech is and how they all look forward to hearing you again. It is very important not to fall for

that one. Never speak again until you speak from the Treasury bench.

What you are at Westminster for is to vote—and the less that you allow yourself to do anything but vote the better you will get on. It may often be difficult to explain the consistency of your party's policy, and if you are wise you will not try.

The wise man contents himself with voting. He joins a party—it does not matter which—sticks to it and votes for it. Say nothing at all, if possible, or if you must say something then confine yourself to shouting out "Dirty" or "Yaboo," or—best of all—"Oh."

### PARTY LOYALTY

Enemies, in the guise of friends, will tell you that it is a good plan to be rebellious once or twice, that the Whips like a back-bencher to show a little spirit.

It is true that there have been examples in history when ex-rebels have been recalled to high office, but that has been only because the whole pack of cards has collapsed, and in order to save anything from the wreck it has been necessary to get a new pack. Before the menace of defeat in war or foreign invasion Empires have crumbled, dynasties fallen and it has even been known for a Whip to lose his office.

It is not with catastrophes of such Himalayan dimensions that we are concerned. As long as the game goes on you are a mug if you believe that independence will be to your advantage. It is just possible, indeed, if you show a dash of it, that they will give you a job of no consequence, concerned with some subject the most remote from your interest, so as to destroy your influence. It is far more probable that they will give you no job at all.

By far the best plan is to make no speech, on or off the floor of the House, always to vote right quietly and regularly,

and then just to wait for it. Sooner or later you will be denounced for your silence by Cross-Bencher in the *Sunday Express*. Then they will know that you are a safe man and will give you a job.

### BEHAVIOUR WHEN IN OFFICE

Even in a job there is no reason why you should take any risks. Thoughtful Civil Servants will write all your speeches for you. "Suggest that Minister might care to thank those who have offered him luncheon," begins the deferential brief. Thank those who have offered you luncheon. Never quarrel with your Civil Servants; then they will see you through for fear of getting something worse.

At Question-Time read out what they have written for you and, if any Member asks a supplementary that the Civil Servants have not provided for, do not be a fool and chance your arm. You cannot be too careful, though the question be but "Can the Minister tell the House whether or not the sun rises in the east?" Arise, adjust your tie, look towards the Speaker, say briskly "Not without notice," and sit down.

Above all, always get somebody else to write your speeches and always read them. Very occasionally you can put in little bits of your own.

But there is danger in this improvisation. There was a politician for whom his Civil Servants wrote "It is never the policy of the Royal Air Force to put a square peg into a round hole," and the politician, being of an adventurous mind, added for himself—what seemed to him plainly to follow—"but always to put a round peg into a square hole." It did him no good and he had to go to the Lords.

It is safest to stick to the text, typists' errors and all—one never knows. Read your speeches word for word—provided, of course, that you can read.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS



# Fear in the Afternoon

By RONALD DUNCAN

WHEN an Englishman attends his first bull-fight one result is inevitable: he comes out in a rush of italics. Mr. Hemingway is still suffering from that affliction. But I hope to recover from my bout within a day or two. For I shan't visit the *Plaza de Toros* again. It was not that I was nauseated by watching the *matadors* or *picadors*. It is that I found it very frightening to be expected to perform a *de poder a poder*—especially as I don't know much about bulls because we rely on artificial insemination.

Taking my place in the *Barrera Sombra* (shade) at Sevilla (Seville) last week I found the March Past of *alquaciles* and *monosabios* (ring servants) most colourful. I heard the shrill trumpet indicating that the first bull was to be let into the arena. A murmur rose from the perspiring (sweating) crowd. The *matadors* waiting in the *callejón* (wings) grew tense. The bull appeared: a ton of blood on four legs, angry as thunder and almost blind with anger.

The *matador's* subordinates played the bull to calm the fury of his entry. Then he, himself, took over with a simple pass or two leading up to a perfect *veronica* which brought forth the crowd's applause. After playing the bull with a few more *faroles* (passes) he brought off a superb *revolera* and a half *serpentina*. I began to understand why so many people don't find this sport utterly revolting.

The *matador* withdrew. It was now the time for the *picador*. Riding his upholstered clothes-horse towards the bull he plunged his *pica* (meat-skewer) into the beast's back. The more the bull charged the horse the deeper the wound in his shoulder. Blood spouted. Gore can be colourful till you smell it. After this episode the *matador* played the bull again. It was certainly no *aplanado*. On the contrary it was a very fierce animal. Yet in spite of that the *matador* went from *pase de la firma* to *manoletina*. And from where I sat it looked as if he and the bull were about to go into a *tango*.

Then the bugle sounded for the second time. It was the moment for the *banderilla* to appear and set his six colourful spikes into the brute's back.

He took the first pair. They were covered in scarlet ribbon. A good *banderilla* allows the bull to charge, sets the two spikes almost vertical and parallel in the animal's back and then, somehow or other, moves himself out of the way. But this *banderilla* muffed it. It wasn't that he didn't get out of the way. That's all he did do. He failed to get either of the red spikes in. The crowd booed. He tried the blue; failed again. The crowd hissed. The bull finally trundled off with only one white spike sticking in his back.

That was the moment when the crowd turned to me. Ten thousand rather angry fans made the most unmistakable gestures in my direction urging me to take over where the *banderilla* had so ignominiously failed. Hats were thrown in my direction. I closed my eyes. I felt sick with fear. I pretended I wasn't there. I even felt for the alarm clock. But opening my eyes I saw the *matador* himself standing

beneath me making gestures of hideous invitation and incomprehensible respect. Meanwhile, the bull padded round the ring, quite forgotten in the *furor*.

I still didn't move. As a matter of fact I couldn't: funk paralyses. But when I saw a couple of *monosabios* coming towards me with that look in their eye that means they're going to carry you shoulder high I began to wonder whether I had not better stagger forward voluntarily. After all, I considered, maybe it would be better to be gored to death by a bull than live to be milked by a bureaucracy . . .

Fortunately, though I dare say that is a matter of opinion—just as I stood to make the supreme sacrifice a chap behind me stood too. He took off his coat. The crowd roared with excitement: "Viva Dominguin!" Since they seemed satisfied with him I sat down, not without some feeling of achievement. After all, I hadn't been completely paralysed by fear.



## Love Locked Out at Locksley Hall

THE lodge gates were shut in a forbidding manner and beside them there was a freshly painted notice board—

### LOCKSLEY HALL

#### SCHOOL FOR SHOP STEWARDS Refresher Courses (Advanced Level)

This notice reminded me that it was here that a powerful Union had outbid a nationalized industry in the property market, and that Locksley Hall, the scene of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, was now the nursery bed from which some particularly brilliant and disruptive strikes had sprung. In fact its reputation in the strike world had grown so high that I was not surprised at the neat label "No Vacancies" which was attached to the larger board.

At this point it may be helpful to those whose recollection of Locksley Hall is rather at the back of their mental drawer if I run through the main points of the story. The poet asks his comrades to leave him, and when they want him sound upon the bugle horn. He then goes over the details of his romance with his cousin Amy, a sickly creature, who received her lover's declaration with the tears of a long-concealed passion. The unhappy pair while watching the shipping found time for a few kisses, but all too soon Amy's parents intervened and she was wedded

to a rich clown (Shakespearean rather than Bertram Mills). The poet with some relish describes the clown's sottish behaviour and Amy's sleepless nights weeping over the "never never" of her lost love. He contemplates a new life in a tropical clime, but decides in favour of Europe and the March of Progress, which he invokes for a final malediction on Locksley Hall. But the most quoted line in the poem, and one which has helped to keep the wolf from many a copywriter's door, is less apocalyptic:

*In the Spring a young man's fancy  
lightly turns to thoughts of love.*

Consequently I was not entirely surprised to see a rather lanky young man leaning against the gate. His hair had what can only be described as a flying-saucer outline, which went well with his high-necked black jumper banded with tangerine and his magenta socks of an unusually phosphorescent splendour. Propping myself against the opposite gatepost, from where there was a fine view of the cooling-towers of the atomic research station, newly-erected on the formerly barren shore, I ventured to remark "Looks like rain."

He shuddered. "I'm not interested in weather, and anyway I'm kind of thinking of emigrating."

"But why start from here?"

That, one might say, turned the tap on. Before my breath had returned the vision of his love-life was revealed to me

in the best Tennysonian mixture of bluster and melancholy.

Aimée she was called (with the passing of a hundred years a French note had crept in), and they had both been filing clerks at the "college," as Locksley Hall was referred to by its frequenters. Their courtship, which had been spent watching the atomic research station rising on the shore, was short and handicapped by Aimée's tendency to catch heavy colds. He had, it appeared, been unfairly treated by the head of the department, who had put Aimée in charge of the A-C files where she was kept busy on Carron, Cousins, etc. He, meanwhile, had been posted to the far end of the room and the alphabet, and, unless information on Zilliacus was wanted, there he languished. But worse was to follow. Pressure was brought to bear on Aimée and she was transferred to the Principal's office.

"She won't like it there," he said darkly. "She'll be thinking about me and the files, when she's got over the novelty. She'll just sink to the level of those fatheads who spend their time swilling tea in that office without any idea of the hard work needed to get a shop steward up to a good striking level."

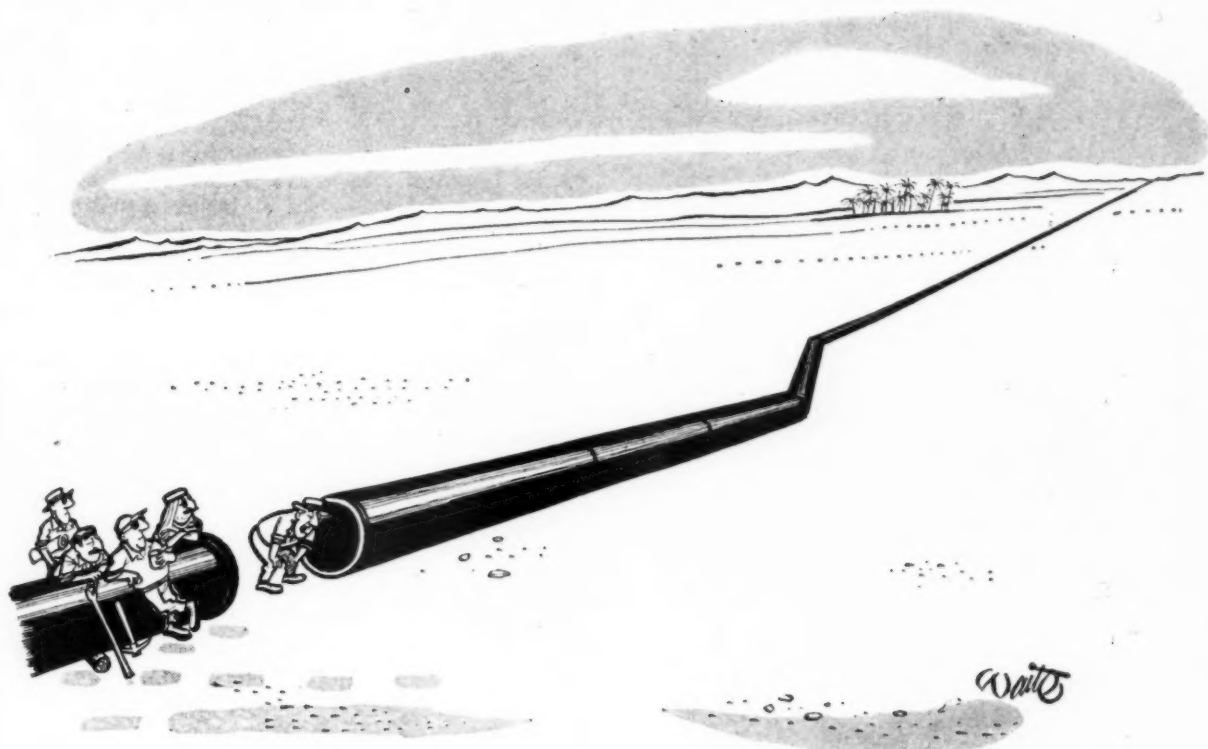
Turning again to the subject of emigration he sketched in the primitive country he hoped to find, and the dusky mate he hoped to meet there. But his tune suddenly changed and he explained that in real life a chap like himself couldn't be expected to put up with anything except a Welfare State and a televised one at that, though after the way they had treated him the sooner the roof fell in on Locksley Hall the better he would be pleased. I hastily agreed with this rather involved statement and quoted Tennyson's penultimate couplet:

*Comes a vapour from the margin,  
blackening over heath and holt,  
Cramming all the blast before it, in  
its breast a thunderbolt.*

He gave a startled glance at the cooling towers, and then with the relieved sigh of someone unexpectedly offered the *mot juste* he nodded and said "That's right."

V. G. P.





"Speaking."

## Life as a Whole

By R. G. G. PRICE

**A**MONG those who have felt strongly that Life is a Unity, Mr. A. G. S. Norris is outstanding. In a recent book\* he has illustrated this belief vividly. At the age of sixteen he just missed colliding with Edward VII. Either on the same occasion or not, according to how one reads the passage, he raised his hat to Queen Alexandra, who bowed. What amazed him was this: a few yards on the Queen turned round and looked again at him. He has puzzled for the reason ever since. Now, about twelve years later he organized a six-day auction for the Red Cross. "By devious channels" a handkerchief worked by the people of Denmark for Queen Alexandra came into his hands. To complete the sequence he explains that five years

before this—I make him twenty-three—he had the best digs in his experience; a few months after his arrival it transpired that his landlady had occasionally been chatted with by Queen Alexandra when a housekeeper at Windsor.

The book-jacket tells us "as readers of the book will soon realize, Mr. A. G. S. Norris is a man of mature mind, having indeed already reached the age of seventy." It would take too much space to attempt to cover the full range of his activities—he was for more than twelve years Chairman of Grand Juries of Quarter Sessions—but no doubt he has found running through them all the same unity as he has found in the hero of this book, who is not himself but Sir Winston Churchill. This is a "Biographical Character Study," and lower down the title-page it carries the proud boast: "Tested against Tabulated Scientific Data"—a boast made, as far

as I know, by no other biography in the language.

Most of the bulk of the book is a straightforward compilation from existing biographies and from Sir Winston's own works. This alone ensures readability. Here and there he is able to supplement the public record with "first-hand evidence." On the question of temperance a friend "who held a very responsible and highest-level national position" says that at a small private dinner party in 1949 Sir Winston had only a glass and a half of champagne and a liqueur brandy. But the light thrown from all these sources together is comparatively trivial. Most pages in the narrative of events contain references in the text to the data elaborately set out in the last section, "The Scientific Evidence." Owing to the method of identification this produces a slightly confusing atmosphere of primitive

\*A Very Great Soul. A. G. S. Norris. International Publishing Co., 37/6

religion. For example, "He was so angry that all his 's's' were pronounced 'th' (XXIII Ak, Ce, Ge, Pe)" or "the fierce light of an idealistic progressiveness burning within Winston Churchill (XXII Bb, Da, Dc, Ee, Fa, Te, Xa)."

The real sources of information seem to be two, though the book is aimed at the expert and I may have lost my way. First you take the letters of the baptismal names, give them their values in terms of the numerical sequence of the alphabet and add them up. Sir Winston works out to one hundred and fifty. Then you add the digits and it comes to six, which is the number-symbol of the planet Venus. For comparison Mr. Norris takes groups of musicians, making it harder by including Russians. I can hear the sigh of relief in his remark about Stravinsky, "whose sometimes mentioned second name, Fedorovich, I am advised, is not a name but a description."

Then you have to know exactly when the subject was born, as the conjunction of the planets is the fundamental fact in the inquiry. A lesser man than Mr. Norris would have been dashed by finding that "authoritative inquiries revealed that this information was unknown at the centre of the family: none was alive who could have supplied it." He simply plunged into some years of mathematical research. As far as I can make out he took a couple of dozen major events, found what the planets

were doing at the time and worked backwards. Then he saw whether his hypothetical birth-time worked for fresh events. The installation of Sir Winston as a Knight of the Garter showed that it did. "These research data have been copied on nine 16-inch by 9-inch sheets. For the benefit of research students of the present and future, copies have been offered and accepted by" the British Museum, the Bodleian and the National Library of Scotland.

Mr. Norris makes a strong distinction between Soul and Man or Personality. He discusses all levels of psychology and makes a strong point by quoting Jung's support for astrology as a scientific tool. Much of the bulk of his scientific section consists of quotations from textbooks of astrology; "a number of their authors hold University Degrees." (As the holder of one myself I must admit that I do not find this adds much weight.) Mr. Norris lays stress repeatedly on Richard Garnett's writing an astrological article under a pseudonym. And Richard Garnett, as he points out, with a footnote giving a reference to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, was second only as Keeper of Printed Books to Sir Anthony Panizzi.

I cannot summarize the thick mass of quotations. Without any explanation that I could find, some of the passages are given charming headings—"A

maypole with a crown at the top and a man climbing to procure it," "A person at the bottom of a deep ravine, with lamp in hand looking for something," "A giant amusing himself with a child's doll." Sometimes the rather bewildering lists of qualities are broken by pieces of general historical interest. The positions of Jupiter at the births of Reynolds and Romney were nearly the same: Disraeli had two trines and one sextile favourable, nothing unfavourable. Charles II's sign inclines statistically towards secret love-affairs.

All this mass of scientific information is served by two indexes, one for the Soul and one for the Man. These are, perhaps, the best reading in the book. To quote some complete entries:

**Generosity:** Generosity, over: Giant:

**Grammarians:** Grasp of method and

detail: Great things, capable of . . .

Kidneys may suffer: Kind: Knows own mind.

Narrow way: **Navy and Army:**

Nervous system, shocks to: Noble

nature: **Novelists: Novelty.**

5 5

"RIGHT: The balloon goes up for Totnes M.P. Mr. Ray Mawby at Totnes Conservative fete at Denbury. Guest of humour was Foreign Secretary Mr. Selwyn Lloyd who said these are boom times. 'Seven-eighths of the population have never had it better.'"

*South Devon Journal*

Typically humorous remark, certainly.





## Last Turn

ANOTHER old London music-hall, the New Cross Empire, is to close. Following is a proposed ceremonial to be performed at all remaining demolitions, to avoid repetitive reminiscences of the "where Marie Lloyd, Little Tich, George Robey, etc." type.

A GILT CORNUCOPIA, symbolizing the slogan "You can't be too corny," shall be lowered from the roof to the pavement outside the box-office and there smashed by a bulldozer.

A BAND dressed in fairly maculate dinner jackets, dark navy-blue trousers, and stout waterproof shoes or boots for the long walk home through the rain from the last bus, shall play the *Zampa* overture, percussion supplied by workmen with picks and shovels.

A COMEDIAN shall address the con-course, saying "A very funny thing will never again happen to me on the way to this theatre, to-night or any other night."

AN IMPERSONATOR of Any Dickens Character You Care to Mention shall continue to give dramatic studies of Fagin and Scrooge, because these are the wigs he has brought, unheeding the congregation's cries of Pickwick, Oliver Twist, Squeers, Sairey Gamp etc., drowned by a battery of cement-mixers.

AN ACROBAT shall swing perilously from a rope on a travelling cradle, to a roll on the pneumatic drills, barking "Hup!" for a fanfare on the siren signalling a tea break as he leaps clear when the rope is hauled in.

A NASAL TENOR shall sing "Bless This House, It's Full To-day."

A CROSS-TALK ACT shall finish straight with a Requiem, adapted from *Cymbeline*, concluding

Olden gags that made 'em bust,  
As this old Empire, come to dust.

TWO ARTISTES RESTING shall engage in conversation before a front-drop representing a bar, the one saying "I've been on the road a good many years but I've never seen business like I was playing to at Darlington the week before last. I'm not kidding boy, I literally brought the house down—"

[A detonated fuse shall then encompass the instantaneous collapse of the premises]

—"like that."

LESLIE MARSH



## The Attorney-General's Song

(Tune: *Das Horst Wessellied.*)

As Ghana grows,  
Inspired by great Nkrumah,  
We shall devise  
New laws for everything.  
All opposition  
Cut out like a tumour,  
Our hearts and minds  
We pledge to Geoffrey Bing!



PRIVATE VIEW

*1—Script-writing with the Brontës.*

# Home Truths from Abroad

By ALISON ADBURGHAM

THE shadow of a sinister silhouette has fallen across Europe. A shapeless shape, an amorphous morp, is advancing upon us from Italy and France. The waistless sack-dress with all its ugly implications stalks across fashion's glossy pages.

In Italy, when the autumn dress collections were being shown, the sack was not only in the salons but already on the march... walking abroad, shopping, lunching, dining. And, truth to tell, in Italy we reluctantly admired it. It had a horrid fascination. There was nothing tentative about its ugliness; and the way it was gathered in to a tight hem just below the knee was a triumph of evil cunning. And then it was so obviously *unreasonably* expensive. It drooped off sloping, aristocratic shoulders with a languid nonchalance only obtainable in the neighbourhood of a hundred thousand lira. It was a bold sack, and at the same time it was a subtle sack. In Florence, seen strolling through the colonnades, it recalled Beatrice, although a Beatrice ungirdled; in Rome it had the atmosphere of a toga, but a toga in which even Caesar's wife would not be above the shade of a shadow of suspicion. Demonstrably the sack was capable of being all things to all women—to all women, that is, except Englishwomen, to whom it could be nothing but a disaster. An Oxford Street version of the sack was a prospect too terrible to dwell upon.

This we realized immediately; for when in Rome it is clearly apparent we do not dress as the Romans do. Indeed, in any cosmopolitan gathering we are conspicuously unc cosmopolitan, not only in our clothes but in the way we wear them. It is the old, old story... our genius for compromise, our talent for muddling through, our last ditch insularity in last year's hat. This is a home truth we only learn abroad; a home truth that, like home cooking, is unpalatable but very, very good for us. Thus we saw, when abroad, that the sack would give Englishwomen an opportunity for dowdiness they would not fail to take. After all, the *belted* sack-dress, in some form or another, is a perennial we have known all down the years, flowering chiefly in the suburbs and the provinces. To convert the

belted sack into a waistless sack would, to their wearers, seem merely a question of leaving off the belt. However, far away from England, home, and Harrods, we felt it quite possible that the 1957-58 sack would never reach these shores. For what Italy does, we take for what it is worth in Italy; we like it or we leave it.

On the other hand, what Paris does cannot be ignored; it is of paramount importance. Thus we awaited the Paris Autumn Collections with anxiety; and when no sacks appeared we felt so much relieved that Dior's chemise-dress—in point of fact a sort of flattened, elongated sack, a bolster slip—left us quite unmoved. Off we went happily for our holidays, to cast off clothes and all thoughts of clothes upon the beach, lulled by the waves and a sense of false security. This peaceful state of mind seemed fully justified on August 27, the release date for pictures of the Paris collections. *Le Figaro*, that day, devoted a page to showing the sixty models which had received the most approbation from the world's press and buyers: sixty models, and not one sack amongst them! And then, the very next day, the atom split. On *Le Figaro's* front page we read: *Les deux enfants terribles de la mode confirment la robe-sac.*

The two infants terrible of the mode are, of course, Balenciaga and de Givenchy. These two designers show their collections a month after all the other Parisian couturiers, and have as much long-term influence on fashion as Dior—possibly even more. In Dior's huge collections there is always something for everyone; in de Givenchy's collections as often as not there seems to be nothing for anybody in this world, although possibly something for the next. He seems to design for an abstract woman; call it "pure fashion" as opposed to applied. Balenciaga is not so remote, but he adheres far more strictly to an uncompromising line than does Dior. And it is the Balenciaga line which can always, a season or two later, be clearly traced through the fashion of every country.

Thus with the de Givenchy-Balenciaga axis emphasizing sacks it was certain that some sack-like manifestations would come our way, as indeed

they have. Can we turn this dire disadvantage into an advantage, as most surely the French and Italians will, with their flair for the accessory *juste*, their apparent delight in whatever clothes they wear, their seemingly effortless neatness, simplicity, and style? How do they come by this, and why don't we? The answer does not come immediately, but on delayed reflection something emerges. For if the fashion writer's journey through France and Italy be a sentimental one in the meaning of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*—that is to say, sensitive—she gathers as she goes, in addition to definitive information about the season's trends, a miscellany of ephemeral impressions from the passing scene, the fleeting encounter, the unsolicited glimpse, the detached moment, the significant something—significant of what?

This miscellany of all sorts lies at the bottom of her mental luggage while the top layer of fashion news is being documented and dealt with. It is as with the child's suitcase from the seaside; underneath the clothes there is a collection of cowries and cockles, dried sea-weed, coloured glass worn smooth by the waves, a piece of glittering quartz, a cork, an uninhabited sea-urchin, a





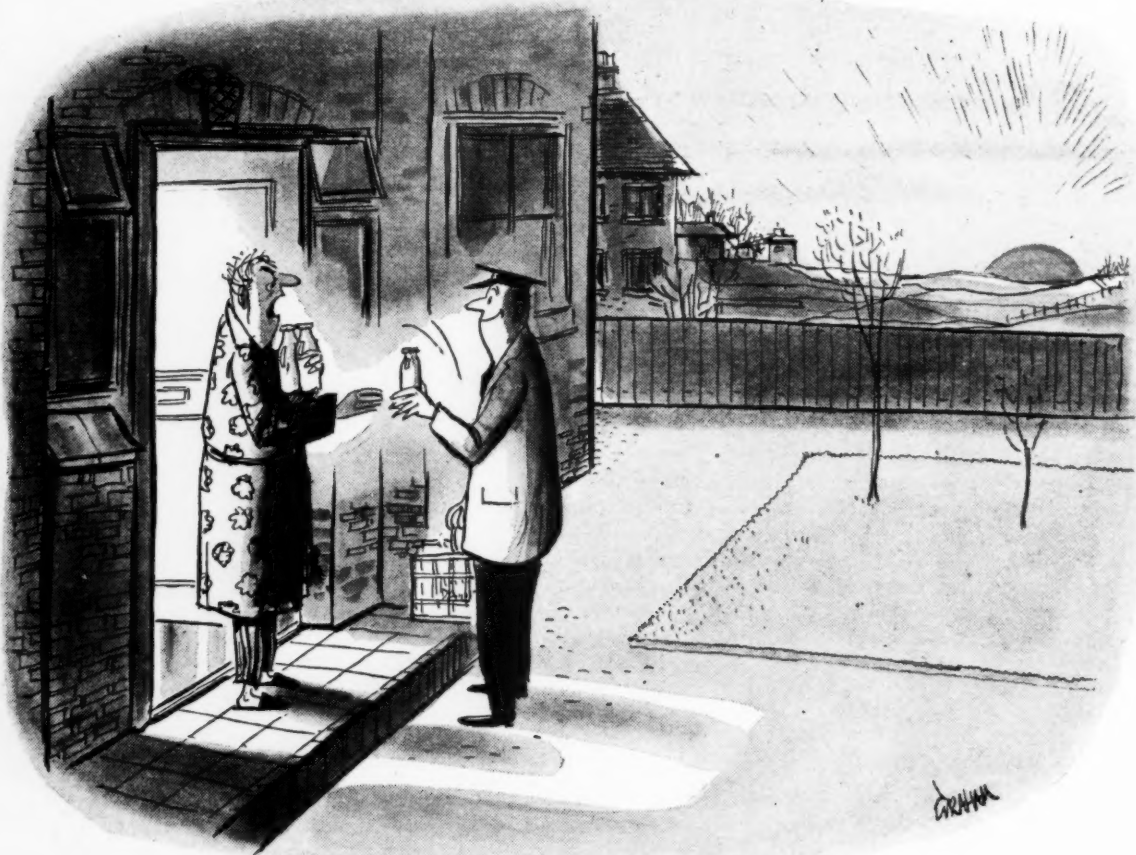
mermaid's empty purse. Exiled from their surroundings they lack lustre, colour, meaning, and they are as often as not tipped out with the sand that has trickled from the beach shoes. So it is with the residue left not by the dress shows themselves but by the people on the pavements, in the restaurants and cafés; by the Vespa riders, the cabaret turn, the art galleries, the *concierge's* daughter. But sometimes, before they are tipped out of mind, the pieces fall into a pattern and combine to give a meaning. Last year the pattern was one of a peculiarly felicitous femininity. One felt there was being forged a secret weapon of deadly subtlety, all the more subtle, all the more deadly, for being sheathed in chiffon. The very air at road was loaded with femininity. And so we wrote of it, but it was wishful writing as far as Englishwomen were concerned because of another home truth:

in England we rarely put femininity into action. We are too self-conscious, too sensible, and too out-of-doors.

Last year, then, it was femininity, that indoor plant, which pervaded the continental air with heady sweetness but which failed to flourish in England's green and cold conservatories. This year everything combines to suggest a romantic approach to fashion; and that is something which, once more, we lack over here. Everything in our scheme of things, from the dressing-table to the ball-room, lacks it. But the weakest link of all is in our shops. How rarely are we *en rapport* with her who serves us; how rarely do we feel she is involved, as she should be, heart and mind and soul, in our choice of a pair of gloves! For one thing, we shop too much in big stores. Fashion cannot be approached romantically in a *Budget Department* or in the *Small Women's*,

staffed by aloof, unemotional assistants calling their souls their own.

In Rome there are no department stores; there is, in fact, but one shop in the whole city with two floors. In little shops little things are sold with solicitude and tenderness; blouses are packed in pink paper, dresses are laid into boxes with a blessing; and with a *riverci* you are sent on your way feeling you have made the luckiest purchase of your life. In London, now, there are many such little shops and boutiques, and we should visit them more. Clothes that are chosen in an atmosphere of friendly pleasure and excitement, of individual well-wishing, are put on with happy expectation and worn with confidence and delight. Then it is as with Julia's lawns and tiffanies: even the plainest suit takes on an air and essence from its wearer, even the straightest chemise-dress, even the simplest sack.



"You're new, aren't you?"





### Plastic Scene

WHEN British Association types are not arguing about the merits of Professor Blackett's inaugural address they can be remarkably flippant. One of them told me the other day that the plastics industry has run into a bottle-neck of nomenclature, that new materials are piling up at I.C.I., Distillers, Monsanto, British Resin, Shell and so on, because the throughput of monikers from the language labs cannot keep pace with scientific development.

I can almost believe it. The range and variety of new plastics is quite fantastic. A brief inspection of the kitchen—made in the interests of this article—enabled me to identify eight "polys," five "renes," four "thenes" and innumerable "rons" and "lons." Bewildering.

Since the war—and particularly since the new programme of oil refining went "on stream"—the plastics industry has made giant strides. This year output is expected to shoot up to some 400,000 tons, export business to at least £32 millions. And new plant, in course of erection or planned, exceeds the present total capacity of the industry.

Plastics are new and therefore have their detractors. They are still regarded by many people as inferior substitutes—less woody than wood, less metallic than metal, less ceramic than ceramics. But the housewife has few reservations about these light, clean, colourful, durable and remarkably cheap materials. It is commonly agreed that the design of plastic products has not always kept pace with scientific progress. There are still far too many domestic plastic articles masquerading as older, more conventional materials, and there are still many plastics trying to understudy roles for which they have no natural aptitude. These shortcomings are, however, insignificant when set against the convenience, availability and cheapness of plastics. More successfully than any other industry plastics has fought inflation on the home front. Its

competition with older materials has stimulated technical advances over the whole field of consumer durables and helped to peg back prices in a score of industries.

The most spectacular rise in sales has taken place in the thermoplastic section of the business where production has improved by about forty per cent on last year. I.C.I.'s output of Polythene, shortly to be stepped up by the construction of another oil cracker at Wilton, is expected to top the 100,000 tons mark within eighteen months. And I.C.I. will soon have to share the enormous market for this type of plastic with Union Carbide, Monsanto Chemicals, British Hydrocarbon Chemicals, and Shell's Petrochemicals.

Another plastics favourite is De la Rue's "Formica." De la Rue's fortunes

are not of course in one bottom trusted, but trade in this highly functional and attractive laminated plastic has been for some time the showboat of the company's fortunes. The Tynemouth factory is at present being reconstructed in a £1 million expansion programme, and a new company, Formica Ltd., with £3 millions of capital, has been launched in agreement with American Cyanamid. It will be a De la Rue subsidiary, and the pooling of research programmes is expected to produce handsome results.

Plastics is still an infant industry. I believe that the larger producers are all set for a profitable decade or so, and that investors capable of sorting out the various trade names ought to back their fancy. De la Rue Ordinaries still yield as much as 7 per cent and at their present price seem undervalued. MAMMON



### Lobsters' Holiday

I WAS a conscientious objector in the last war. Not even the arguments of General Fuller or Captain Liddell-Hart could shift me from my conviction that nothing I valued could be preserved by blowing it up. I maintained that war was entirely unproductive of anything save violence. Of course I was wrong. But it has taken a Lowestoft fisherman to convince me.

I had been out lobstering with him in his small boat. Every pot we brought to the surface contained at least half a dozen potential Thermidors. Yanking the pot over the side the fisherman spilled the tangle of blue claws into the boat, throwing the large ones into a box in the stern. Those under eight inches in length had to be thrown back to conform with the Ministry of Fisheries' regulations. Several lobsters were measured against a ruler and given the benefit of the doubt. For the haul was good. The fisherman told me that he'd landed four tons of lobsters this season. "We've never had it so good," he said, "thanks to little old Hitler."

While I sat sucking the delicious black

spawn from the legs of a female lobster—it's quite as good as caviar—the fisherman expanded on the connection. Apparently this year's bumper season is entirely due to the fact that there was no lobstering during the war. The mines prevented it. And lobsters grow slowly. Fish in the boat over eight inches in length were, he told me, about twelve to fifteen years old.

"We've got about two more seasons of war-lobsters to come," he said, "but after that they'll be as rare as turtles."

The reason for that dim future is not only because the fish will have exhausted the results of the peaceful and productive spell of submarine war but also because the Ministry have unwittingly hastened the scarcity. They give a subsidy to fishermen, enabling them to buy a small boat. Too many fishermen, too few breeding lobsters.

"And the novices are so anxious to pay off their tackle and gear, they take big and small and smuggle the little ones straight into hotel kitchens and get nearly double the price."

"That's bad."

"But what's worse," he said, "these sea spivs carry a little hard brush with them and when they haul in a lobster covered with spawn, they don't throw her back as they're supposed to—no, they just brush the fertile lobster eggs into the sea and sell the hen as clean."

"I see what you mean," I said licking the last trace of this delectable stuff from the lobster struggling in my hand, "I'd better not do this again."

"Not if you like lobsters. You've wolfed about twenty thousand while you've been sitting there."

"A little war would soon put that right," I said. RONALD DUNCAN



## BOOKING OFFICE Benedictine Battlefield

Cassino: Portrait of a Battle. Fred Majdalany. Longman's, 21/-

THERE were in fact four battles at Cassino. In the first the brunt was borne by the American Second Corps, with the British Tenth Corps on their left and the French on their right. Its object was to support the landings at Anzio, and its net profit, in exchange for a great number of casualties, was a small beach-head over the Garigliano.

The second battle was commanded by General Freyberg and his *ad hoc* New Zealand Corps. Its net profit was nil, and it involved the controversial destruction of the Benedictine Monastery that had stood since A.D. 529 and was occupied at the time by a handful of monks and a swarm of terrified civilians.

The third, also commanded by General Freyberg, was the one in which the 4th Indian Division went bald-headed for the Monastery while the New Zealanders attacked a Cassino reduced to rubble by heavy bombers; and the fourth, in which both the Fifth and the Eighth Armies were engaged, finally broke the German winter line and allowed the Allies to advance up the Liri valley and connect with the break-out from the Anzio beach-head.

From these four great battles, spread over some five months, Mr. Majdalany has made a truly memorable book.

He has a trump card which gives his book a dimension too often lacking in academic studies of battles by back-room tacticians; he served at Cassino as an officer in the Lancashire Fusiliers and saw the problems as they confronted the men who had to solve them. From his high-level survey of the fighting, Mr. Majdalany has a way of tracking in to a close-up of the infantry at work—and this was above all an infantry fight—so that the battlefield comes to life with moving clarity. His descriptions, for instance, of the Royal Sussex on Snake's Head, and of the 26th New

Zealanders' attack on Cassino Station, could only have been written by someone who knew the battlefields at first hand.

Identification with the fighting troops sometimes leads writers into consequential derogation of the Staff. (In an earlier book Mr. Majdalany has an imaginative account of a young staff officer buying wine for the G.O.C.'s mess when he should have been marking up his situation-maps.) In this case the



higher commands are treated with scrupulous objectivity, almost indeed with excessive deference. Not that he hesitates to condemn where he feels it appropriate; he has little time for the American General Lucas who, to Churchill's scorn, brought eighteen thousand "B" vehicles into Anzio in a fortnight to serve seventy thousand men; and his distaste for General Mark Clark is unconcealed. General Clark is said to have held up dispatches headed "With the Fifth Army" so that they could be altered to "With Lieutenant-General Mark W. Clark's Fifth Army"; he ordered the bombing of the

Monastery and wrote in his reminiscences that it was "a tactical military mistake of the first order"; and when the Anzio garrison broke out he suddenly redirected them on to the "great prize" (his phrase) of Rome instead of closing the trap on the retreating Germans at Valmontone; so it may be that Mr. Majdalany's views are not unshared.

The two biggest queries to have come out of the Cassino battles are, first, the justification of the bombing of the Monastery, and second, the issue whether Cassino was indeed the only way to Rome. Mr. Majdalany devotes a good many pages to the Monastery problem, and his account of the scenes inside the Monastery during the bombing is admirably done. He has thoroughly investigated both the German and the Benedictine points of view—which at one place unexpectedly merge, for the German defender of Cassino, General von Senger, was a lay member of the Benedictine Order—and he believes that the correct decision was made.

To resolve the other problem it is only necessary to provide a viable alternative. Several were considered at the time and discarded. Mr. Majdalany, perhaps feeling that the brief he had set himself was to record what happened and not to argue about why it happened, has not concerned himself with them. On the whole, he is probably right. His book records the events of Cassino with precision, refinement and a compassion rare among military writers. The "Monday - morning quarterbacking" (General Clark's term again) can be left to the theorists.

B. A. YOUNG

## Gas-bag

The Millionth Chance. James Leasor. Hamish Hamilton, 18/-

The title is ironic. Lord Thomson, the Labour Government's Air Minister in 1930, eager to increase national and personal prestige by an airship flight to India, had said that the R-101 was as safe as houses except for the millionth

chance: Mr. Leasor's enthralling tale of the project, studded with alarming details of interference and mismanagement, shows that it ran a million risks. The book's quality is in its atmosphere of mounting unease, conveyed through the slow piling up of disturbing information and heightened rather than impaired by highly objective writing. It seems to say "I make no comment, but this is what happened," and the technique is chillingly successful. An odd appendix of evidence from beyond the grave has a quite separate fascination, and should perhaps have been omitted. J. B. B.

**Orchard of the Furies.** L. Steni. Heinemann, 15/-

One remembers *Prelude to a Rope for Myer* after many years for the claustrophobic tension of its atmosphere; but though the start of Mr. Steni's latest novel seems to promise tremendous drama, the interest later becomes diffused among too many stock characters, whose problems have obviously been devised to present a microcosm of post-war Europe. Assembled in Western Germany are the doomed, philosophic, chess-playing Jewish lawyer; the Polish socialist worker, conducting an illicit class-conscious affair with the District Commandant's ailing wife; the French Liaison Officer's pregnant young German mistress, captivated by the crypto-Nazi Thaddeusz: an attraction also felt by the middle-aged English woman doctor, though Thaddeusz himself is homosexual. Despite the vivid descriptive passages and some powerful set-pieces—notably a mass re-burial of S.S. victims, which the villagers attend in national costume, to smother the coffins with flowers—the book peters out as inconclusively as its chapters end, leaving unresolved the paradox of "a race which builds nests for storks, and at the same time makes lampshades out of human hide." J. M.-R.

**Rebirth of the Polish Republic.** Titus Komarnicki. Heinemann, 3gns.

Nearly twenty years of peaceful existence were won for Europe when Polish patriots repelled the Bolshevik army of world-invasion at the Battle of the Vistula in August 1920. This is the claim that justifies an argument endlessly extended to show how long the Great Powers remained callously indifferent to those Polish concerns they were eventually forced to respect. Protocols and memoranda, diplomatic notes and conflicting editorials are massively piled up to this end, and throughout the weary chapters of appeal and negotiation no less than in the hour of action there is just the one hero—Joseph Pilsudski.

It is not easy to-day after the catastrophe of 1939 and the partial recovery of recent months to live again in the times when ancient Poland was first stirring to new life, but Professor Komarnicki is wrong in assuming that the free

countries went to war with limited selfish objectives. Nothing less than the liberation of Europe from intolerable tyrannies was at issue and this implied from the beginning the rescue of the Poles. C. C. P.

**Sublime Tobacco.** Compton Mackenzie. Chatto and Windus, 21/-

Conservative smokers will be saddened to learn that even among three-year-olds in Honduras the cigar is being ousted rapidly by the factory-made cigarette. The history of smoking has seen many such changes, of habit, and few can be better qualified to describe them than Sir Compton, who first lit up at four and a half, got through twenty cigarettes and an ounce of shag weekly when he was ten, now consumes more than an ounce of dark flake a day, and puts his total consumption so far at half a ton.

He has gathered a mass of information about every aspect of his subject, and presents it amusingly, though not without a great display of personal prejudice. The most ardent smokers may find him a little absurd in judging tobacco on the level of wine, refusing to believe it can do harm, and lauding its moral benefits almost as if it were a substitute for religion. E. O. D. K.

**Eagles' Nest.** Anna Kavan. Peter Owen, 15/-

This novel recalls irresistibly those days when the initiated—mostly corduroyed girls with long greasy uncombed hair—clutched fervently in grubby hands translations of *The Castle* or *The Trial*. Kafka's allegorical method seemed to epitomize the illogical complexities of service and wartime routine, and was a peculiarly suitable model for writers unable to construct a coherent story; but since then his influence has altogether waned. Miss Kavan, much of whose work was printed in the *Horizontal* heyday but who possessed an original if eccentric talent, appears to have succumbed belatedly to this Central European Svengali. Despite the brilliance of its style, *Eagle's Nest* has the irritating effect of a cryptic dream recounted at great length to someone who is himself feeling somnolent: the narrator, an unemployed librarian with artistic gifts, subject to frequent attacks of migraine; the enigmatic and god-like Administrator who proves to be the unwilling slave of an even more mysterious "system"; the arid surroundings and exotic splendour of his mountain eyrie: all belong to a passing literary fashion now as dead as Dada. J. M.-R.

**The Vanderbilt Feud:** The Fabulous Story of Grace Wilson Vanderbilt. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jun. Hutchinson, 21/-

The quarrels of the rich are invariably entertaining, especially when they relate to American millionaires and their self-made dynasties. A proud and jubilant

Hollowood



"... for if not, the angle CDA is greater than the angle CBD, which is impossible."

chronicler is Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jun., whose mother, Grace (the Fifth Avenue "Queen"), inspired this personal story of those who are poor on seven and a half million—dollars admittedly, yet still a reasonable security, or so it would seem to those of us who deal in the commonplace hundreds.

Grace, the daughter of a mere millionaire, was viewed as a fortune-hunter by Grandpapa Vanderbilt, who excommunicated his heir who dared to marry this rather "fast" girl. Grace was not put out: with dauntless courage she battled to dislodge the Mrs. William Waldorf Astor as a "society leader," bagging all the best heirs-apparent and a few kings. It is surprising what seven and a half millions can buy if one puts one's mind to it, and quite properly Cornelius Jun. remembers Mamma with a Balzacian pleasure. Here is the perfect bedside book for snobs and snob-enthusiasts. Not even Du Maurier could so exuberantly describe the luxurious vulgarity of the American rich, which says much for Cornelius Jun. as *un homme engagé*. K. D.

**Return to the Islands.** Arthur Grimble. Murray, 18/-

Readers of *A Pattern of Islands* will remember that Sir Arthur left them, in 1921, on his way back to the Pacific. This volume, published posthumously, describes his adventures during the next seven years as Resident Commissioner and Magistrate on Ocean Island. Delightfully remote from the Old Guard at the Colonial Office, he was far ahead of his day as an administrator, loving and understanding his people and working through friendship whenever possible. Patience and humorous curiosity were



on his side. His method was to sit on the beach and thaw the children; in time the adults flocked round him. Their trust took him safely through the real dangers of labour riots, and gave him a rare chance to get inside the island life.

Had we had more Grimble the map of the world might now have been redder. He wrote beautifully, often very funnily, and this sequel, with its fascinating chapter on Gilbertese poetry, deserves as great a success as his earlier book.

E. O. D. K.

**Devil's Brood.** Alfred Duggan. *Faber*, 21/-

This is not an historical novel, though it uses some of the methods of fiction, but a straightforward account of the family feuds of the Angevins. They were descended from the Devil, according to legend, but, violent and treacherous as they were, it is difficult to feel they were much worse than other twelfth-century fief-snatching clans. Mr. Duggan rubs in the characters of Henry II and his sons so thoroughly on each appearance that they might be at Greyfriars. We are never allowed to forget that Richard was earnest and harshly efficient or that Geoffrey was deceitful.

The personal clashes within the framework of oath-taking and lordship make a vivid and reasonably clear story. In making it dramatic Mr. Duggan counter-attacks the legal historians who are blinded by Henry the law-giver to the sins of Henry the father and Henry the vassal. The meagre bibliography might have included Stubbs's reprinted Introductions

from the Rolls series with their wonderful pictures of the Angevin temperament in an evolving feudal monarchy.

R. G. G. P.

**Britain's Air Survival.** Sir Roy Fedden. *Cassell*, 11/6

Sir Roy Fedden is well qualified to write this reappraisal of Britain's position in the aeronautical world. In doing so he emphasizes the decline in British air superiority. The grave fault behind the present weakness of our aircraft production lies in the development of a considerable number of projects concurrently. Our economic and manpower limitations restrict such an ambitious programme and show that we have not learnt a lesson from the Germans during the last war when the diffusion of effort seriously weakened their air power. In the author's opinion the key to the problem of rationalization and reorganization of this country's air power could stem from a few highly experienced engineers as Civil Servants permanently on the strength of Air Ministry in close liaison with the aircraft industry. This book contains constructive criticism which merits consideration at a high level.

A. V.

**On Poetry and Poets.** T. S. Eliot. *Faber*, 21/-

Mr. Eliot insists that a poet's criticism cannot be considered apart from his poetry; he is, for instance, likely to write best about the poets whom he has found helpful in his own work. This may

account for the fact that the "Poets" section is the more fascinating in his new book of reprints. He manages to be dry, detached and humorous, and at the same time to communicate his own enjoyment and understanding of the work he is discussing. The well-known introduction to a selection of Kipling's verse (it is reprinted here) is an excellent example. I do not mean that the "Poetry" section is unsuccessful, but only that when dealing with subjects as vague as "What is Minor Poetry?" Mr. Eliot's delicate instruments sometimes seem to find nothing tangible enough to handle. Even so he is always interesting, and one long essay "On Poetry and Drama" should not be missed. In it he manages to write without egotism an absorbing account of his own progress as a dramatist. P. D.

**The Silken Ladder.** Jean-Louis Curtis. Trans. Violet Schiff and E. Beddington Behrens. *Secker and Warburg*, 12/6

The French specialize in the short novel, the significant episode that is cut to the bone instead of being puffed out to fill a full-length novel. They also specialize in the short novel that is intended to look like this but is really a thinnish short story inflated, as here. Monsieur Curtis has already made an enviable reputation; but this pseudo-significant, nudgingly ironical study of a girl, an amorous Capri fisherman and a solemn young man who loves her will not add much to it. The narrator, to whom the girl tells the story, publishes it after her death in an air-crash and then receives the letter from the solemn young man which forms the second part of the book; he seems gloomily aware that he is only a literary device.

My favourite sentence from the translation is spoken by a gay friend of the heroine: "You old chucker, you did drop us in a funny way to hide your loves in this god-forsaken spot!"

R. G. G. P.

## AT THE PLAY

*The Entertainer* (PALACE)  
*Saturday Night at the Crown*  
(GARRICK)

THE revival of *The Entertainer* for a limited run at the Palace brings back Laurence Olivier in one of the most remarkable feats of acting in his whole career, as Archie Rice, a seedy third-class comedian going wretchedly downhill in a haze of gin and forced jollity. This is an extraordinary performance. Sir Laurence sinks his own personality completely; his face, his accent, his gestures assume a vulgarity fascinating in its consistency, genuinely pathetic and yet containing a quarter-note of satire. We watch him in Archie's blowzy, boozy home-life and we watch him battling to strike sparks from a half-empty music-hall with dreadful song-and-patter; at the end, when the façade



Ada Thorpe—THORA HIRD



collapses, there is a terrible minute when his machinery runs slowly to a standstill before the footlights, in utter misery. Seeing him for the second time, I was even more impressed.

He dominates the evening, but is supported extremely well. Brenda de Banzie's portrait of Archie's beaten, neurotic wife is beautifully done, and George Relph as the old father gives us a splendid piece of bubbling nostalgia. One now realizes that in the original production, at the Royal Court, Dorothy Tutin was miscast, for Joan Plowright has come in to put considerably more edge on a rather negative part.

John Osborne has revised his last act but it remains muddled and very sentimental. Seeing the play again it still appears repetitive and short of plot or shape, but in human understanding it still seems better than *Look Back in Anger*. Self-pity has almost gone, the observation is sharper, and with his skill in dialogue and his sense of situation Mr. Osborne is nearer a good play.

*Saturday Night at the Crown* is a vehicle—to be specific, a brewer's dray—for Thora Hird, an actress who can wring the heart in dilapidated pathos and now turns with almost terrifying realism to blowzy comedy. This is a pierhead piece, aimed I take it at the great coaching public; its wit is confined to such earthy saws as "Keep your lugs back and you learn plenty," or "Skirt'll draw a feller further than gunpowder'll blow him," and Miss Hird excepted it asks little of its actors, apart in most cases from an unnatural hydraulic capacity. I have never seen so much sheer liquid consumed on the stage, and unless a way has been found by clever

chemists to anger treacle-and-water into froth, it was real beer. But everyone stood up to it wonderfully, except Miss Hird, whose part demanded a gradual deterioration, and who alone seemed to be drinking a too-pink substitute.

The author, Walter Greenwood, hasn't bothered about plot. He has reproduced the sort of thing that happens, and the sort of things that are said, in a north-country urban bar full of thirsty regulars. Next door a baby is arriving, upstairs a dispute rages over a will, and two women are rather differently after the happily bachelor landlord; these phenomena, broadly treated, bring faint hints of drama to the bar, but in fact the entire entertainment is designed to let Miss Hird talk.

She looks and sounds pure Belcher, as gossip, connubial tyrant, busybody and social bulldozer. Loosened by the pink potion, her tongue grows more malicious, until at closing time she sinks into a eupletic coma. She is a modern Mrs. Caudle, but able to quell a whole bar full of men into exasperated silence; and in her cups she has a method of mumbling a pork pie that assumes a guignol horror. It is a finely judged performance—the only one here that matters—and I cannot understand why I didn't think it funnier. Perhaps the reason is that Mr. Greenwood has been too faithful to nature. His play is almost innocent of farce. It hugs reality, and soaks pondering on the mothers-in-law periphery are for me a wasting asset. But not so for my fellow-revellers at the first night, who laughed enormously. Doubtless the arterial roads will soon be bonnet-to-bonnet with eager audiences.

ERIC KEOWN



[Campbell's Kingdom

STANLEY BAKER

with cliffs and bridges being dynamited and the villain and his gang being lured to and fro on split-second timing so that the oil-gang can get their lorries through. I enjoyed every minute of it once the story got under weigh, and particularly liked the gusto with which it is acted and directed. Dirk Bogarde makes a convincing hero, however unreal his fatal illness seems. But it will soon get to be that a modern girl will no more trust a man with Mr. Baker's cast of countenance than her grandmother would have trusted a baronet who twirled his mustachios.

*Band of Angels* (Director: Raoul Walsh) has the predictability but not the virtues. Its prototype is the woman's magazine serial set in the *Gone with the Wind* country, and it runs very true to type. Clark Gable plays the good-hearted slave-owner who buys an almost white girl (Yvonne de Carlo) and falls in love with her at the most awkward moment, just when the Civil War is beginning. One of the troubles is that it tries to deal at its own level with something *real*, the colour problem, and always fades out of existence at the contact. Otherwise it is large, glossy, highly-coloured wish-wash, and will no doubt please the audience for which it is designed.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

I quite enjoyed the new Chaplin and will write about it next week. Otherwise *Around the World in 80 Days* (17/7/57) and *The Witches of Salem* (11/9/57) continue.

Releases include *No Time for Tears* (21/8/57), which is calculated slush, *Manuela* (31/7/57) and a good railway Western, *Night Passage* (Survey, 21/8/57).

PETER DICKINSON

## AT THE PICTURES

*Campbell's Kingdom*  
*Band of Angels*

THERE is a sort of virtue in predictability. *Campbell's Kingdom* (Director: Ralph Thomas) has it. Its story of the struggle for a patch of the Rockies between good oil interests and bad hydro-electric interests is the cattle v. railroad (with gold intervening) battle of innumerable Westerns. There was even a moment, when hero and villain's henchman were searching the same building for missing documents by night, that had much in common with a scene in *The Marx Brothers Go West*. The presence of Stanley Baker to play the hydro-electric foreman with his usual confident villainy until his dam predictably bursts and whelms him, does nothing to allay this feeling for the inevitable. In an odd way too the slight bogusness (to my eye) of the Canadian scenery, and the amount of women with English accents who seem to inhabit the wilds of Canada, actually help the film into its stride as a schoolboy thriller type of entertainment. It certainly is exciting,

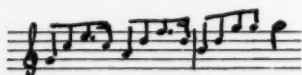




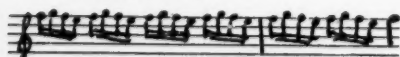
## ON THE AIR

Fewer Words,  
Less Music

NO doubt it is excessively ungracious of me to demand less music and less talk all in one breath. Deprive the television of these two staples, you may say, and what, apart from cricket and conjurers, have you got left? Well, I only demand them under the extreme provocation of "Criss-Cross Quiz," where every new competitor—and indeed every new appearance of an old competitor—is greeted by compère Jeremy Hawke as an opportunity to make conversation of a banality probably unsurpassed in the entire history of the entertainment industry ("Now, Mr. Flannery, I believe you were once mistaken for somebody else"); and where, on the evening on which I happen to be writing, a Hammond organ has in the space of half an hour, less time off for commercials, six times played this

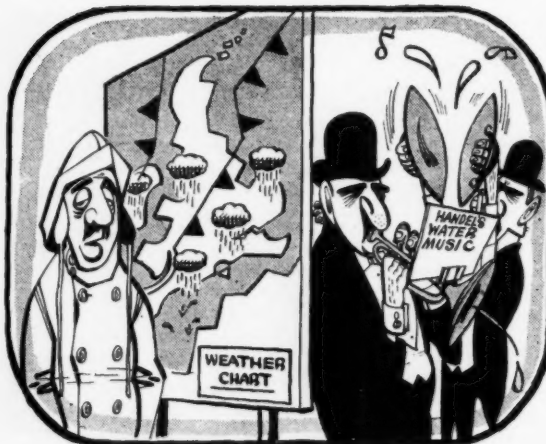


and nineteen times this



Until the appearance of the new autumn schedules this programme took the screen three times a week; so a keen Criss-Cross fan had to listen to those damn tunes no fewer than eighteen and fifty-seven times, respectively, between Monday and Friday.

Infuriating as the music is, the chatter is probably the more afflicting of the two



Background Music

plagues. Pete Murray, in charge of the newly-arrived "Place the Face" game, probably reached the silliest point yet when he asked a dancer (male) who was to appear on his programme "Are you keeping fit?" (Yes, yes, I know it was a build-up to something else; but if your first step is so ludicrous, the rest of your dialogue simply topples over for want of a decent foundation.) But although compères as a race tend to plumb the lowest depths of fatuity, they are run close by I.T.N.'s team of interviewers. Patricia Lagone, entering a room at Cheam School in which there were half a dozen beds, asked the long-suffering headmaster "And is this the dormitory, Mr. Beck?" George Fitch, interviewing Mr. Gaitskell in that hectoring tone that all television interviewers seem to have caught from Woodrow Wyatt, said challengingly "You've never come [to the T.U.C.] before?" "Oh yes," said Mr. Gaitskell patiently, "three times out

of the last four." At that point, mercifully, the sound broke down.

As for that ridiculous pattering tune that precedes and follows the I.T.N. bulletins, I can only urge them to smash the record before the public break in and smash it for them. Apart from anything else, some of the more public-spirited of us don't care to annoy our neighbours with music after eleven, and that frantic dash across the drawing-room to switch off as soon as Mr. Day or Mr. Kennedy directs his coy glance at the studio clock off-screen is getting to be rather a strain.

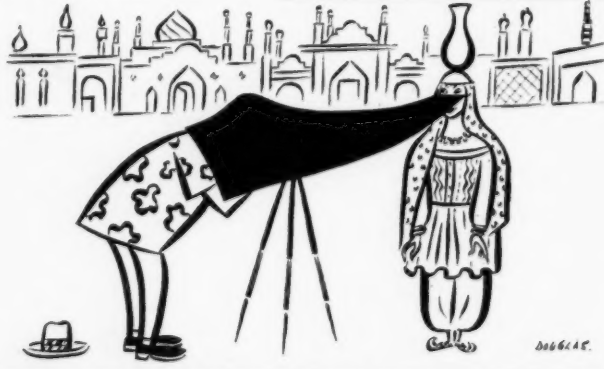
Television producers employ music, it seems, as confectioners employ cochineal—to add an additional, but meaningless, glow to an already complete job. You might say that no sound could be more exciting than that of a jet aeroplane; but news-shots of aircraft at Farnborough were accompanied not by this but by a kind of sub-Walton musical background.

The point is that music and words are fundamentals, to be used just where they have something to communicate, even if it be only the finer shades of an emotion. If they add nothing, the golden rule is: leave them out. Will Mr. Flannery do any better at his game because he once had an amusing experience with a goldfish? Is Prince Charles's dormitory more sharply delineated because Miss Lagone had to prompt Mr. Beck into telling viewers where they were? Of course not.

B. A. YOUNG

### NEXT WEEK'S PUNCH

will be the Autumn Number, containing 32 editorial pages in black and white and four in colour.



COPYRIGHT © 1957 by Bradbury, Agnew & Company, Limited. All rights of reproduction are reserved in respect of all articles, sketches, drawings, etc., published in PUNCH in all parts of the world. Reproductions or imitations of any of these are therefore expressly forbidden. The Proprietors will always consider requests for permission to reprint. Editorial contributions requiring an answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. CONDITIONS OF SALE AND SUPPLY.—This periodical is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade, except at the full retail price of 9d.; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorized cover by way of Trade or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

Reg'd at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. Entered as 2nd-class Mail Matter at the New York, N.Y., P.O. 1903. Postage of this issue: Gt. Britain and Eire 2d. Canada 1d.\* Elsewhere Overseas 2d.† Mark Wrapper top left-hand corner "Canadian Magazine Post" † Printed Papers—Reduced Rate.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES (Post paid) { Great Britain and Eire £2.16.0  
Canada (by Canadian Magazine Post) £2.10.0 (\$7.25)  
Elsewhere Overseas £3.0.0 (U.S.A. \$9.00).

Punch Office,  
10 Bouverie Street,  
London, E.C.4

y  
e  
l  
n  
e  
e  
o  
n  
t  
n  
y  
e  
-  
-  
s  
-  
t  
-  
t  
n  
f  
-  
-  
e  
y  
if  
a.  
:  
o  
e  
a  
y  
is  
o  
of

=  
all  
t.  
ct  
of  
y

2